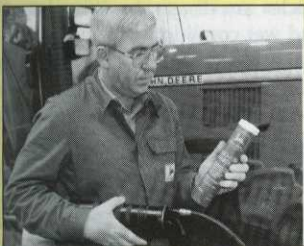


◆ Jacobsen has become one of the first to meet new EC Directive noise tests with their comprehensive mower range. Introduced to the statute books earlier this year, the directive calls for sound levels of 100dB(A) maximum at 4 metres for machines with cutting widths of 0.5 to 1.2 metres and a 105dB(A) maximum at 10 metres for wider machines. The maximum permissible sound pressure level at the operator's ear is 90dB(A) for all ride-on machines.

The range of Jacobsen machines that have undergone tests include machines as small as their Commercial 20 Pedestrian Rotary, through their range of Greens King, Fairway and Turfcat mowers to the recently announced HR and ST5111 rotary and reel machines. Details - tel: 0536 417777.

◆ The latest liquid fertiliser to hit the market is 'Tournament', the result of extensive research by Agriland Ltd to formulate a reliable rapid response treatment for amenity turf. Agriland's Roger West believes "there is a place for a 'total turf feed' that combines conditioning, nutrition and colour enhancement in one easy-to-use package. There can't be a greenkeeper who hasn't at some time felt apprehensive about getting his turf into peak condition for the big day - and that's where 'Tournament' comes in". One 20 litre container will treat 1500m<sup>2</sup>, equal to 3 x 500m<sup>2</sup> golf greens. It will not be promoted as an everyday fertiliser but as a premium product for special events and badly worn patches. Details - tel: 0202 532291.



◆ Produced from rapeseed oil, John Deere's new Bio-Grease-Gard is a biodegradable grease for use as a lubricant in tractors and other grounds care machinery. In addition to being kind to the environment, it offers optimum lubrication performance and protection against wear and corrosion. It is also water-resistant and highly stable.

This new biodegradable grease is mainly used to lubricate axles and wheels, gear casings and drive shafts, and three-point hitches or front PTOs. First-time users are advised to contact a service specialist to ensure the lubricant is approved for the proposed application.

Bio-Grease-Gard is available in 400g cartridges, price £1.65. Details - tel: 0949 60491.

◆ Rhone Poulenc's DATACHEM Version 2 is now available. The computer software programme designed to assist the amenity spray operator with the safe accurate and efficient use of pesticides was initially launched in 1991. In addition

◆ A new organic based fertiliser for use on fairways has been launched by Humber Fertilisers Ltd. The new fertiliser, named 'Humber Fairway', is in granular form and is supplied in distinctive 25 Kg bags delivered direct from the factory to the golf course. 'Humber Fairway' is available in two mixes - a spring/summer 12:6:6 and an autumn/winter 3:14:14, both are claimed to offer the benefits of steady release of nutrients which ensures steady growth of quality grass and good strong root establishment. Details - tel: 0482 20458.

to the features of the original package, DATACHEM Version 2 has the facility to add details on any manufacturers' products for use within the system. Also new is a Spray Operator Record System, allowing the user to store spray application details electronically. DATACHEM Version 2 reduces paperwork and administrative time whilst increasing accuracy, efficiency and safety in the use of pesticides. Details and a free demo disk - tel: Mr Sion Price on 0277 301115.

◆ On the 10th anniversary of the launch of their trenching machine Shelton have announced the Shelton Supertrencher Mk Va. With a number of design changes, the discharge conveyor has been lengthened to enable bigger trailers to be loaded and a new belt with moulded chevrons is now fitted to enhance soil flow. Primary drive is by hydraulic motor with secondary drive by chain, enabling the belt speed to be altered. Made as a self-contained unit, it may be carried in the vertical position on the machine or may be slid off its retaining lugs and carried separately.

A bigger discharge port incorporates a deflecting plate of stainless steel and the conveyor fits more closely to the base to reduce the chance of soil spillage. The redesigned crumbler follows the arc of the cutting wheel with minimum gap and is protected with a shear pin. The bottom shoe is quickly changed to cater for differing trench widths. Pipe laying crumblers for laying pipes from 35-110mm diam. are available. The mini gravel hopper (optional) allows simultaneous placing of permeable fill. Details - tel: 0507 578288.

◆ Following extensive research Farmura Environmental Products are launching Foresight Flowable Wetting Agent - specially formulated and developed for use on turf. Foresight has been tested at the STRI for safety in use and the product is packed in award winning recycled plastic containers with an integrated easy-view measuring strip and pouring device for accurate measurement and dispensing. Half a litre to 500m<sup>2</sup> makes the product economical in use. Each 2x5 litre pack contains a free litre of Blazon Spray Pattern Indicator. Details - tel: 023376 241/581

◆ More proud possessors of BS5750 quality assurance certificates include Hayter Beaver, Fisons Horticulture UK (part 1), Rhone Poulenc Agriculture Ltd., D&E Turf Maintenance Ltd., and Elsons Seeds.

◆ Sports Turf Services of Newbridge, Midlothian have announced an agreement with Neptune Scotland Ltd to become sole distributors for the entire Neptune range. The manufacturers are able to tailor make batches of conditioner to meet specific soil problems. Details - tel: 031 3332345.

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# Roll

**Check the soil and check the sward when picking turf suitable for the golf course, recommends TIM FELL**

**O**f the many factors that are used to describe quality in cultivated turf for greens, two are by far and away the most important; soil type and cultivar.

The main advantage of using turf instead of seed is to get the greens open for play earlier. Why, then, jeopardise the continuous use of those greens by laying turf grown on unsuitable soil? I was on a golf course the other day to look at some problem greens. They had been turfed exactly 12 months before, but I could lift any turf cleanly from the surface. With a resemblance closer to slabs of butter than turf, it's not surprising that the grass was struggling. Although this was an extreme case it does highlight the need to buy turf that is grown on soil that comes as close as possible to the specification used for the underlying rootzone. This means growing turf on sandy soils with very low levels of silt and clay.

The consequences of using turf grown on soil containing a high percentage of fine particles are disastrous. What happens is that, under heavy wear and wet conditions, the fine particles migrate into the air spaces and block off the natural drainage channels. Rain and irrigation water cannot get down to the underlying drains, and the turf stays wet and spongy. In dry conditions the soil sets hard, making it virtually impossible to hold an approach shot on the green. The only recourse is this case is a prolonged period of intense aeration, hollow coring, and top dressing with the proper rootzone mixture.

The maxim 'You get what you pay for' is pretty accurate when it comes to cultivated sportsturf. But one exception that proves the rule is the considerably higher price for one particular greens turf on the market today. Particularly when that turf includes a cultivar of chewings fescue (80% of the seeds mixture) that was dropped from the STRI Merit Lists years ago. Why, you may ask, does the grower use this cultivar? The answer is that it is tolerant of a total herbicide that knocks out annual meadow grass. This is meant to be the justification for the high price.

My feeling is that growing turf for greens should be approached in a different way. First, choose the cultivars that are most likely to meet the demands required of them on golf greens. One of the ways of doing this is by selecting from the STRI Merit Lists. The STRI cultivar trials, despite some criticism, do compare all the new and improved varieties coming from the breeders, and provide an invaluable reference. Many cultivars on the lists today are huge improvements on those appearing ten years ago, and are likely to perform better in today's golf greens. Second, control annual meadow grass by a planned programme of selective herbicide applications at reduced rates. This is very effective if you know what you're doing.

The question of which type of turf to use for tees is an interesting one. In my view there is little doubt that the use of dwarf perennial ryegrass in the mixture adds enormously to its wear tolerance. As such, I would recommend it for use on pay-as-you-play courses, or any course with heavy usage. Some of the newer cultivars of amenity ryegrass coming from the Dutch breeders look very exciting. With finer and finer leaves, and compact growth habits capable of thriving under lower mowing heights, they are going to be difficult to beat.

But many clubs prefer to use turf without ryegrass for their tees. I have become a convert to smooth stalked meadow grass

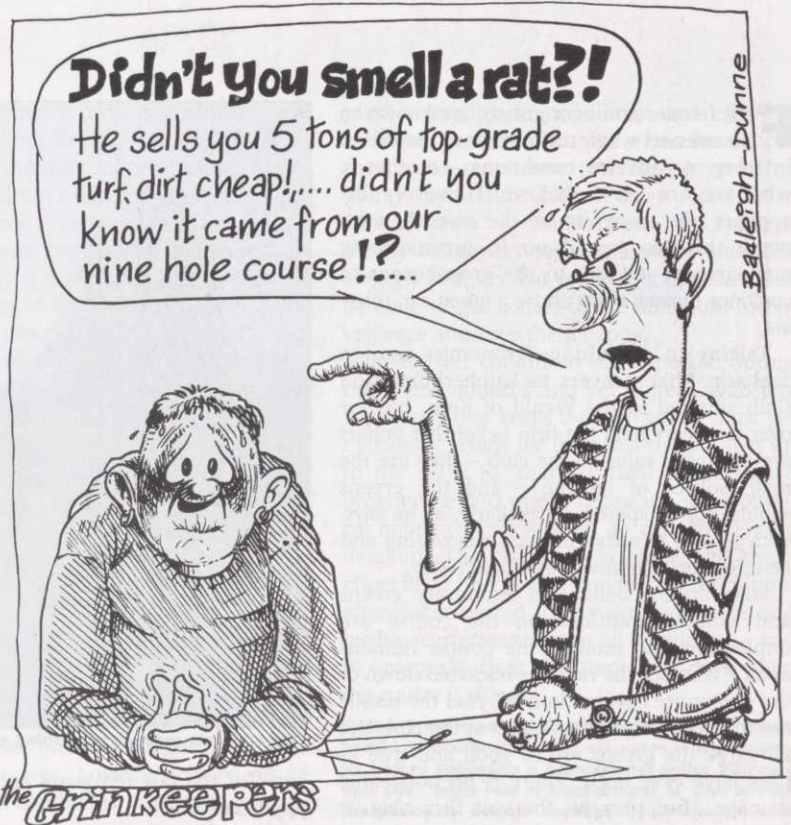


# 'em

in fescue/bent mixtures since the introduction of Limousine. Before Limousine, smooth stalked meadow grass stood out like a sore thumb and looked rather ugly. But the finer, lighter-green leaves of Limousine have changed all that, to give an attractive, relatively hard-wearing, sward. It's probably not a good idea, however, to use smooth stalked meadow grass in the turf for green aprons because it does tend to have a drag effect on a rolling ball.

The best way of making sure of the quality of any turf is to go and see it being grown and harvested in the nurseries. You'll soon get a good idea of how much attention is paid to detail. However, in practice, lack of time prevents many people from making the trip. In that case, a sample is the next best thing, but make sure you keep it in good condition so that it can be compared against subsequent deliveries. If you're not satisfied that the delivery matches up to the sample, send the load back where it came from.

■ The author, Tim Fell, is managing director of Tillers Turf Company Limited.



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# Greens must not

**F**ine fescues and bent grasses are known to be stressed when turf areas are played on in frosty or adverse conditions – or that is what we are led to believe. However, this appears not always to be the case. As with many theories passed on in greenkeeping management it is up to the greenkeeper to convince himself what abuse a green can tolerate.

Talking to consulting agronomist Gordon Jaaback, Mike Travers at Lamberhurst Golf Club situated in the Weald of Kent, has for over ten years held the firm belief that golfers are the main value to the club – they are the main source of income – and the greens should not be spared. Particularly, as he says, with all the effective modern renovating and aerating turf equipment available today.

Mike doesn't believe in temporary greens and unless conditions on the course are unpleasant and muddy, the course remains open – whether the rain has bucketed down or the greens are covered in frost. And the results are there for all to see. Golfers at the club will all agree the greens are as good and true as they have ever been. There is no noticeable damage after play on the wet firm clay or frosted greens. This has been the case every



Golf on frosty greens: 'everything should be done to keep greens open'

year for the last ten years and the members appreciate this.

There are no gimmicks or special treat-

ments. As on most courses *Poa annua* is dominant on the green though fescues and bents seem to be increasing. Mike keeps the nitrogen

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# be spared

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levels up with six applications of 10-2-6 plus 1.5% Fe turf granules at 34 grams m<sup>2</sup> and follows up with an autumn treatment of 4-6-7.5 plus 3% Fe at the same rate. Liquid applications of iron sulphate are applied in one or two treatments in the late autumn before the frosts arrive. He keeps the cutting height low – in the winter at 5mm and during the summer as low as 3mm. Yes, the root growth is shallow – not more than 35-40mm – but Mike is confident he will improve the depth.

The greens are constructed with local heavy soils. Underground pipe drains were installed in the nine greens constructed in 1976 but are generally ineffective. There is no significant difference in the drainage of these greens compared to the first nine holes that are without any drainage. The soil texture is such that permeability is very low and surplus water unable to penetrate is lost by surface drainage. The greens all have a good puttable grass cover – although mainly *Poa annua* – and Mike believes the low cutting height is necessary to get the playing surface he wants.

Mike directs his efforts at removing thatch and relieving compaction. He is a strong believer in the regular use of thatching reels –

often heavily when growth is vigorous – and he slits throughout the year, hollow tining in the spring and autumn. All greens have had at least two Vertidrain treatments in the summer and levels are not adversely affected.

'Today the worst compaction can be treated', he says, 'so why spare the greens if there is no sign of suffering or deterioration?' Over 2,000 rounds were played between Christmas Eve and January 5 when frost cover every morning lasted until ten o'clock. Although often well frosted into the rootzone the temperatures – though not measured – could not have been lower than -5°C. This is probably where the explanation lies. Temperatures are so close to zero that rigid conditions do not persist and limited bending and bruising of the leaf can occur. Cut short to 5mm the dense mat is not displaced by foot traffic – even with no frost – and so physical damage is negligible.

The winter of 1992-93 has been the most severe on record. With no temporary greens, play has been maintained on frosty mornings and often on wet greens throughout the winter. The course was, however, closed on 26 occasions when conditions were such that the course virtually closed itself. Now that winter

play is gaining in popularity cost effective measures to remove surplus water throughout the course must now rate high in priority. Today most clubs have a busy schedule of commitments – Lamberhurst has approximately 100 society days in the year – and Mike strongly believes that everything possible must be done to put golfers to the minimum inconvenience and keep them happy.

Frosty wet conditions are expected during the winter months and yet golfers, who pay the money that keeps the club going, must get maximum return for their investment. It is up to the clubs to 'sharpen' their maintenance programme and where necessary effect physical improvements to keep up with the golfing demand. The challenge is there and every effort must be made to provide all the cultural attention required to sustain a vigorous and healthy turfgrass cover in all conditions – and to drastically limit the number of days when the course is closed.

■ Mike Travers served an apprenticeship as a greenkeeper in Scotland, serving six years in that capacity before becoming a professional golfer 22 years ago. His triple role at Lamberhurst is that of PGA professional, course manager and chairman of green.

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# REVVING UP



**M**ark Barthelmie, the powerhouse behind Risboro' Turf, is quite unlike the accepted notion of a typical executive.

For a start, you would be hard pushed to find him dressed in the archetypal uniform of the rising yuppie – the Yves St Laurent suit and the nifty silk tie. I'll grant you he's got a smart suit – I've seen him wearing it – but he's much more at ease dressed casually, more in character as the boss who at the drop of a hat will scamper off to stage a convincing machinery demo in the middle of a fairway, ever at ease and easy to be with as 'one of the boys'.

For weeks I'd been chasing an interview, my plans thwarted by his being in America 'on business' and relieved to be at last meeting the man who had proved so hard to nail down. I arrived at the company headquarters, a nifty, button-bright, purpose-built location in rural Buckinghamshire complete



Top gear: Mark Barthelmie aboard his 1991 Harley-Davidson Sturgess

with its own green acres of testing ground, to be greeted by Mark's co-director Richard Taylor with the classic put-down, "Mark's out at the moment, hopes he won't be long – have a cup of tea!" Had Mark forgotten I was coming, I wondered, but within minutes he bustled into

his office, a grin beaming from ear to ear, fresh from staging a demo. The smile told it all, and though I was too polite to ask the outcome I could tell it had been a resounding success. Yes, Mark Barthelmie is the sort who gets high on the scent of 'a deal' and never happier than

when face to face with his prospect, convincing him that he's got the answer to a particular problem.

The walls of Mark's office tell a tale of their own, emblazoned with plaques and plinths in recognition of Risboro' Turf as trailblazers. There are 'Dealer of the Year' and 'Distributor of the Year' awards by the number, manufacturing and trade association accolades galore – all declaring the company as one that gets off its butt and performs! The casual observer could not fail but to be impressed.

Unconventional is the word that springs most readily to mind, for I learned that Mark had combined his 'business' jaunt to the GCSAA show at Anaheim with anything but a conventional pleasure trip – to Las Vegas with Lynn, his fiancée of some three years standing, followed by their taking a short hop in a stretch limousine to one of the dozens of 'wedding chapels' ➔ 18

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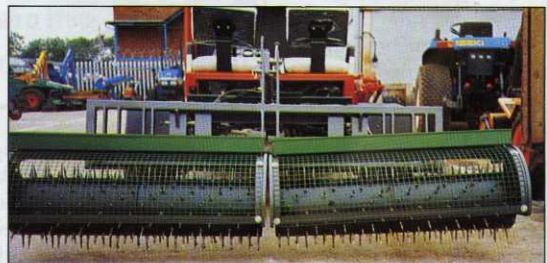
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# REVVING UP

17 ➔ found in the marriage capital, there to pay out a few dollars and take vows of matrimony American style – a mere seven minutes later our bachelor hero and his betrothed left as fully paid up members of the ‘just married’ club, returning swiftly to the hotel bar for a celebratory glass of soothing spirit!

I learned from Mark that Risboro’ Turf had been formed about six years ago by him as a direct result of his involvement in his father’s business, Risboro’ Agricultural, a company selling farming machinery and fine turf supplies and famous in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxon for innovation and service. Mark trained in agricultural engineering at Rycot Wood College before joining the family firm and covering the whole gamut of the business – fine turf, workshop, stores, on the road, machinery development and modification, sales and general administration and the setting up their first computer system – a perfect training ground that left little to chance.

Bolstered by his new found administrative skills and with the growing realisation that the agricultural business was running on borrowed time, with farming going through a transitional period, Mark saw the need, as he put it, to ‘look after his own interests’. At the time Risboro’ Agricultural had been modifying Ryan turfcutters for Marshall Concessionaires, and by applying the principles of service, back-up and having spares on the shelf, together with making the turfcutters work efficiently on hill and dale rather than on flat land, Mark used his contacts to gain the new firm’s first agency: Risboro’ Turf becoming synonymous with Ryan in Bucks, Berks and Oxon. The rest is history, for the company wrote its own success story and other agencies followed. Winning the Jacobsen agency was another milestone and it is with some pride that Mark looks back now to those days in the early 1980s when he became one of only two original Jacobsen dealers (now area distributors) to maintain an unbroken connection to the present day.

On the road covering BB&O single-handed, Mark soon became aware that there were bigger fish to catch, a customer demand waiting to be met for tractors, hollow-tiners, tee mowers and the like.

Soon Iseki and Beaver were added and gradually the company took other agencies on board, building up a sound business which today supplies – and services with great efficiency – a complete range of fine turfcare products.

That is the secret of success for Risboro’ Turf, the efficiency with which they sell and service, for Mark believes that service is the key to their acceptance in the market place. The business is split between golf courses (they call on every greenkeeper in the three counties and count on something like 98% as customers) and local authorities, together with an increasing growth in the domestic market, having won the Honda agency from fierce competition.

The company has recently moved into manufacturing, rising to the bait of numerous requests to supply something similar to the old Pattisson/Sarel roller for greens aeration, but a machine-mounted version that could be hauled behind a Cushman or compact trac-



**‘To be honest, I think the dealer very often gets a rough deal and I aim to see that my dealers don’t – it’s that simple’**

tor to cover greens at some speed. Using skills learned at Rycot Wood College, Mark slipped into mechanical engineering mode to develop prototypes which, constantly developed and improved, have proved most successful in production, selling in rewarding numbers. Indeed, so successful has this venture been that they have appointed some 15 dealers countrywide to handle the demand.

I’ve never met a businessman that at some time didn’t have a tub to thump or an irritation that needed airing. Mark is no exception. Choosing his words carefully, he described his particular ‘tub’ as that of being “constructively critical of the way some manufacturers handle themselves and how they conduct their business”. He continued, “I’m outspoken and always have been, which is not surprising because we are at the receiving end – in a direct firing line from manufacturer and end user alike – and this is one of the reasons why getting into manufacturing has been

so rewarding. I’ve seen to it that those things I and my fellow dealers don’t like about the way some business is conducted are conspicuous by their absence in our ethical involvement as a manufacturer. For example, I know all my agents personally and we are not out to carve each other to pieces, rather we’re out there to conduct sensible business and sell the right product. Equally, our warranty claims are handled without so much as a squeak, no matter what. To be honest, I think the dealer very often gets a rough deal and I aim to see that my dealers don’t – it’s that simple!”

Being conscious of one’s responsibilities, proud of one’s achievements and craving to get things right is something that Mark is vehement about. Having discussed the approach to responsibility and seen how they are ‘getting things right’, pride is paramount in their most recent achievement, being only the second in the country in their specialised business to gain

the coveted BS5750. “We wanted to be at the front of the queue because we are critical of ourselves and the way we do things. I’m always inviting input from staff and clients alike and we make a point of asking our customers what they like (or don’t like) about our business. The BS5750 has proved a great sharpener, getting effect systems into place for us to cope with constructive criticism – in truth, we get very few complaints and I’m planning to keep it that way!”

In these ‘Gold Key’ interviews the stock question that often throws a subject is ‘what makes you tick?’ It’s surprising how many business tycoons ramble on at length about their industry, never at a loss for words, yet at the thought of talking about themselves they become tongue-tied. Not so our Mr B, who’s eyes positively lit up as without hesitation he replied, “I love my motorbikes, they keep me sane!” I said he was unconventional, and to prove the point he went into a reverie about the joys of owning

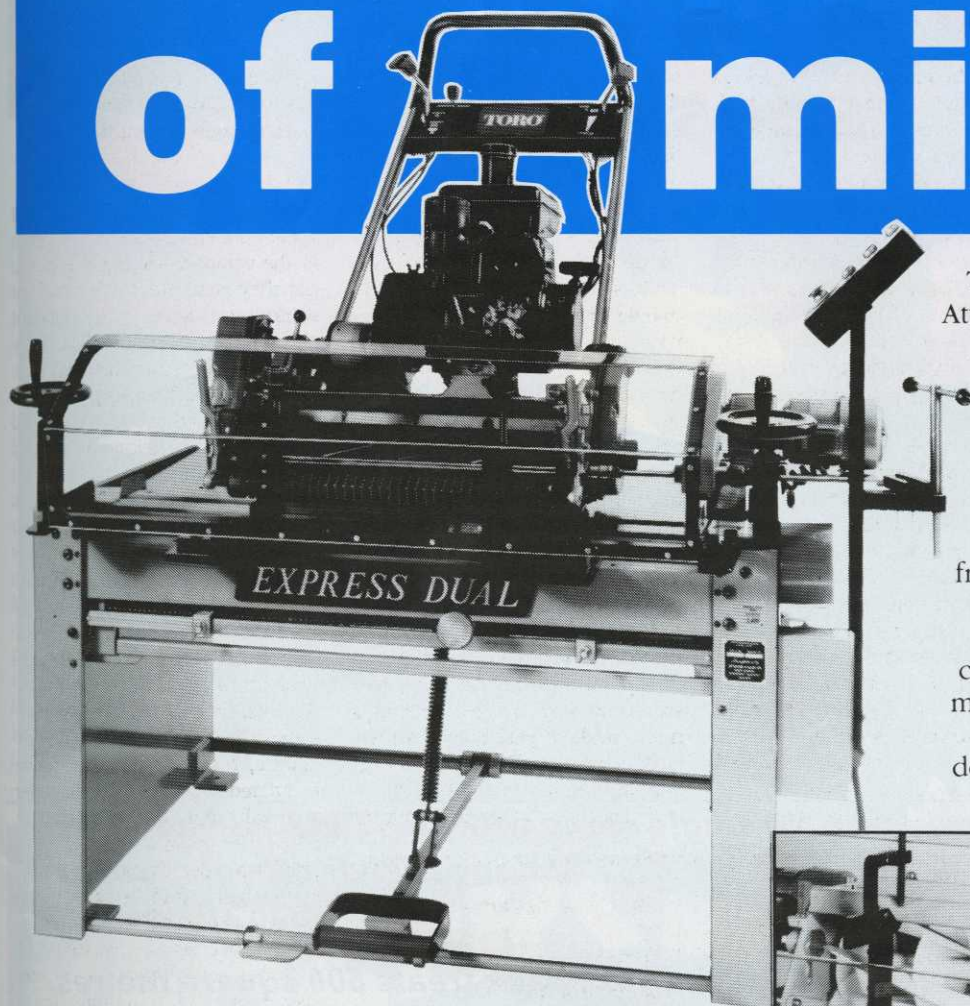
and riding not just any old machine, but his beloved 1991 Harley-Davidson Sturgess, a giant of a machine which is his way of blowing away the cobwebs of everyday life. Not content to be a ‘biker’ alone, he’s influenced others in the company to follow suit – or did they convince him? – and the workplace is awash with gleaming and delicious two-wheeled monsters. I drooled over three stunning Harley’s in Mark’s garage, his own, Lynn’s (finished in a strident shocking pink), and co-director Richard’s, all 1340 powered. Together they like nothing better than to ride to mainland Europe for the annual Harley ‘thrash’, their destination this year being Milan.

Mark’s greenkeeping connection goes back to the old days of EIGGA – with an involvement in section affairs through local secretary Seve Schmitz. Enamoured by the sight of a huge Jacobsen trophy on Seve’s mantle, Mark learned that it was competed for by greenkeepers regionally and nationally, the overall winner going to the USA. As a Jacobsen dealer Mark sought involvement; and in splitting the event away from being a routine section meeting they’ve sponsored a BB&O tournament ever since, even though the national event is no more. “To sum it up”, Mark told me, “I’ve always thought it right to put something back into the heart of our business – the greenkeeper – which readily explains why I’m a Gold Key supporter. It is an indication of our absolute commitment to them. Finally, as a further commitment to improving professionalism, we have plans to open a training room in the winter, for greenkeepers to spend four or five hours with us and perhaps join us for lunch, give them a chance to gain hands-on experience with state-of-the-art machinery – maybe on how to set up the latest cylinder mower or groomer – and meet local reps and machinery specialists for an informal exchange of views”.

Roy Kates had primed me to expect an individualist and a free-thinker and I was not disappointed – I came away conscious of the commitment this man and his young team put into everything they touch. The greenkeeping profession in Bucks, Berks and Oxon can rest easy, Mark Barthelmie has his finger firmly on their pulse. It is beating vigorously.



# Peace of mind



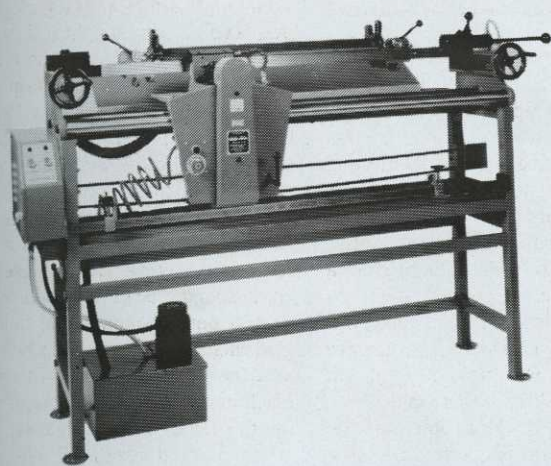
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